**Black Isle Partnership (BIP) – Black Isle Communities Meeting**

**Zoom Meeting 1000 8 June 2021**

**Present:** Cllr. Gordon Adam (host, Highland Councillor and BIP), Jon Palmer (BIP), Julian Paren (Minute taker and BIP), Becky Richmond (Black Isle Tourism Team), Sarah Macdonald-Taylor (Avoch and Killen Community Council), Neil Cameron (Resolis Community Council), Nigel Shapcott (Cromarty Development Trust), Cllr. Jennifer Barclay (Highland Councillor), Peter Ratcliffe (Cromarty Community Council), Helena Macleod (Kessock Kindness and Residents Association of North Kessock), Vanessa Halhead (BIP), Anne Mackay (Killearnan Community Council), Alison Petch (Culbokie Community Trust), Megan Mackenzie (Black Isle Cares), Ann Jefferson (Fortrose and Rosemarkie Community Council), Shane Manning (Highland Council, Principal Traffic Officer )

**Apologies:** Cllr. Craig Fraser (Highland Councillor), Anne Phillips (Fortrose and Rosemarkie Community Council), Sinclair Browne (BIP), Helen Robinson (Rosemarkie and Fortrose Trust) and Sheila Currie (Transition Black Isle)

**Introductions**

Gordon Adam introduced Shane Manning (Principal Traffic Officer, Highland Council) to the meeting)

**Agenda 1: Minutes of the last meeting held 1 June 2021:** The minutes were accepted as a true record, and Jon Palmer was thanked for his role as Minute Taker. Julian Paren said that the Minutes of all previous Minuted Meetings were available at

<http://www.black-isle.info/black-isle-partnership-strategic-partnership-meetings.asp>

**Agenda 2. Chanonry Point and Rosemarkie – Parking issues**

Gordon Adam introduced Shane Manning to outline Highland Council’s approach to mitigate current and forecast numbers of visitors in the surroundings to Chanonry Point and explain the need for community volunteers to play a role.

Shane explained the long-term solution that had been devised with the co-operation of the Golf Club. This entails two smart signs: one located past the Deans Road turning of Ness Road and the other at the final turning off Ness Road at Wester Greengates. The signs would imply: Car Park Full – Come back later. Use overflow car park.

This plan could not be implemented this summer, because of the long delivery times to purchase necessary kit for a smart system (12 weeks plus) and also no location was yet agreed for an overflow car park.

A short-term solution for 2021 could entail volunteers at Chanonry Point activating a non-smart system. The volunteer would use a mobile phone to trip a signal at a temporary battery-fed information panel at the corner of Ness Road with Wester Greengates once the car park was full. Thereafter a one-out-one-in rule would apply with cars waiting by the Wester Greengates turning. The volunteer could react to the capacity pressure at the car park and make decisions as to whether the system was operational or not.

Shane was asking for 2021 whether there were volunteers in the community who could play the role of car park attendant. Money from the Parking Fees at Chanonry Point would be available to pay the car park attendants.

Sarah Macdonald-Taylor presented her initial thoughts. She could see that this system was needed seven days a week and not just at weekends as first suggested. There were Health and Safety issues as there was no toilet at Chanonry Point so a minimum of two car park attendants at a time would be necessary. Because there was now sufficient exposure in the media to the fact that the dolphins were statistically more likely to be seen on a rising tide, bottlenecks could occur outside the conventional 1000 to 1600 period because the tide changed by an hour a day. That said, dolphin appearances were unpredictable at any state of the tide.

Shane Manning said that he was at this meeting to get everyone’s views. The knowledge of locals was invaluable.

Ann Jefferson (Fortrose and Rosemarkie Community Council) commented that there were toilets at the Golf Course that the car park attendants would be allowed to use. She directly asked Shane Manning about the income from the Parking Charges. The local community had been offered 50% although some thought that was too little, but no money had yet been received by the Community Council for historic parking. She emphasised that a minimum of two volunteer cap park attendants were needed at one time. She said what would make the greatest impact on parking availability would be to restrict the length of vehicles at Chanonry Point to under 5 m. A mobile home could take up the space of five cars. Her first priority was a sign before accessing Ness Road of No Toilets and No 5-m vehicles at Chanonry Point. It would be safer for those in cars if there were no large vehicles at Chanonry Point.

Jennifer Barclay said that Highland Council had been investigating fields close to Ness Road that could be made available as overflow car parks. However she had very recently learned that both the site once-destined for a Primary School was not Highland Council property and the other potential field had been let to a farmer for 2021 and so was unavailable.

Shane Manning said the only way to restrict vehicles to Chanonry Point would be by a Traffic Regulation Order. There would have to be a sign on the main road. A Traffic Regulation Order would permanently stop vehicles but could not be seasonal. To get legislation in place would take a considerable time as the officers involved were already stretched on other projects, such as the Rosemarkie Marine Terrace scheme.

Shane said that a temporary non-smart Car Park Full system controlled by paid volunteers could be running within a few weeks. He reminded the meeting that an earlier attempt to control numbers by use of a shuttle-bus had been funded by Highland Council.

Sarah Macdonald-Taylor and Julian Paren both commented that as described the long-term solution of counting vehicles in and out would take no note of the length of the vehicle. Shane said the kit needed to take account of vehicle length would cost an extra £4000 – a cost that some thought was acceptable for dealing with oversized vehicles if they could not be banned from Chanonry Point.

Shane then outlined the proposed scheme for Rosemarkie with a one-way traffic flow along Marine Terrace, a length of the road with a 10pm to 10am parking prohibition, bollards to separate pedestrians from cars, and with bollards along an extended length of the coast road to indicate the required use of the road and verge for parking. The meeting noted the plans that had been trailed earlier.

Becky Richmond (Black Isle Tourism Team) remarked that an application for NatureScot funding was incomplete because requests to Highland Council for permission for displaying signage had not been acknowledged or actioned. She noted that this could jeopardise the funding application, which if successful, would save Highland Council money. Shane Manning reiterated that all signs had to follow a legal format if within a boundary of a public road, and Highland Council had no flexibility in the matter.

Jon Palmer thanked Shane Manning for his attendance at the meeting and agreed that the interested parties on the Black Isle would need to have further discussions. In particular it would need to be decided who would employ the community workers needed to operate the car park.

**Agenda 3. A9 and the Munlochy Junction**

Gordon Adam reported on the meeting of Ward Councillors, MSPs, Police Scotland and Transport Scotland.

The meeting agreed to “look at” a 40mph restriction for the approach to the Tore Roundabout “with moderate urgency”. The meeting agreed to consider improvements to the lighting of the A9/B9161 Munlochy Junction.

On the major issue of the Munlochy Junction that had been the subject of a 196-page A9 NORTH KESSOCK TO TORE STUDY STAG Appraisal: Case for Change Report by WSP, no progress was made. There was no agreement on reducing the speed limit to 50 mph, even on a temporary basis. Transport Scotland wished to follow an approach consistent with that followed elsewhere in Scotland, and not to set a precedent, which if an accident subsequently occurred, could have the blame directed to Transport Scotland. Gordon Adam said the meeting did not consider what impact a serious accident would have, if it could be later argued that a speed limit could have prevented it. Gordon Adam reported that he was surprised Police Scotland were not supportive of a speed limit.

Jon Palmer noted that he was glad not to have been at the meeting, as to do nothing was no solution. Even the suggestion to extend the southern slipway to the Junction would take three years.

Gordon Adam said he was disappointed and he gauged there would be political support within The Liberal Group on Highland Council to take up the case. He had written to Kate Forbes to see if she would back a campaign. The office managers of both Kate Forbes (Gordon Bell) and Rhoda Grant were on the call.

Nigel Shapcott agreed that publicity and petitions were probably needed. He thought that Traffic Scotland should be reminded of the hours and hours community representatives had spent on the issue and the cost of the WSP report. Anne Mackay was fired up for a Press Campaign as the A9 so dominated Tore/Killearnan.

**Agenda 4: Tourism and Rangers**

Three rangers are active around the Black Isle, including Tim Francis (Senior Ranger) and Richard Mackay.

Sarah M-T has met up with Tim Francis twice at Chanonry to discuss issues. She said he has been very active in engaging with campervans and motorhomes parked at Chanonry Point, the Munlochy hide, and Udale Bay in the evenings, to advise them of where to park overnight. He has also passed on water-based wildlife disturbance concerns to a different ranger dept. Junior rangers have also visited Chanonry Point at key times.

Sarah M-T had also met Richard Mackay at Chanonry Point and discovered he was unaware that tourist patterns were influenced by the tide. Jennifer Barclay had met Tim Francis efficiently persuading people to move off inappropriate parking.

Peter Ratcliffe said he was unaware why the Cromarty Toilets were closed, but they were. He noted that the Rosemarkie Toilets which were open 24/7 were vandalised within a week of opening. Opening times would need to be reconsidered.

Nigel Shapcott was appalled the Cromarty Toilets were closed without explanation. No explanation had come from Highland Council – a total failure in communication. [Later – the toilets were repaired and reopened within two days].

Becky Richmond demanded that the Ward Councillors take a fresh approach with Highland Council and reflect that Communications within and without Highland Council were unacceptable. Highland Council did not respond fast enough to enquiries from the communities with the result they felt ignored. Indeed Becky went further to say she felt the Black Isle is overlooked by the Highland Council.

Gordon Adam reflected that there were fewer Council officers than hitherto and they are often overwhelmed.

Helena Macleod mentioned how the Loch Ness Hub had provided paying toilets in their new development and they were indeed profitable. Ann Jefferson countered these views by saying that the toilets in Rosemarkie did not make money. The meeting recognised that a renovated toilet would not have the same appeal as a purpose-built facility recently constructed.

**Agenda 5: Think Health - Think Nature fund**

Becky Richmond outlined the scope of the application that she had prepared in partnership with Helena Macleod. The plan was for a Black Isle Think Health – Think Nature Festival. One aspect was to work with the Community Councils to take groups on local village walks to “Get to know Your Village” and to identify what was missing in the village to make a local walk more appealing. There was a proposal for unpaid carers to meet up for mutual help and support etc. The legacy of the Festival would be awareness of safe trails at all seasons around a village with important aspects mapped (benches, toilets etc). The objective was to give people more confidence in getting out and about more regularly close to home, benefiting health and combating loneliness. The project had been submitted in the name of the Black Isle Partnership.

Helena added that there would be training for 15 Health Walk Leaders and a look at more seasonal activities.

Jon Palmer congratulated Becky and Helena on the project’s strong community focus and asked if those who would lead it in each community had been identified. Becky said most had been identified and mentioned the importance of local historians.

Anne Mackay mentioned Alasdair Cameron’s book on the walks in the Killearnan CC area, and bemoaned that nobody from Craigrory had ever shown much community initiative. She said she would be keen to hear from anyone from the community who would like to take part in the CC.

**Agenda 6: News from the Communities**

All joined Anne Mackay in congratulating The Cromarty Care Project for receiving news of the award of the Queen’s Award for Voluntary Service.

**Agenda 7: Local Area Committee**

Following a request from Nigel Shapcott, Gordon Adam gave a quick resume of the progress made since Highland Council’s decision to break-up the area committee that was responsible for the Black Isle, Dingwall and Seaforth. He confirmed that three was an allowable quorum for an Area Committee and there would be a review of standing orders in the autumn. The next elections to Highland Council would be in May 2022. He believed a number of decisions possibly including housing, community asset transfers and licensing, would be delegated to the Black Isle Committee, but probably not Planning issues. There would be asset transfers to the committees.

Gordon Adam thought that the Black Isle Partnership and the combined Black Isle Community Councils should be proactive in suggesting what powers should come to the area committee. Jon Palmer commented that training for laymen in local decision-making would be useful if localism was to be strongly implemented. Gordon Adam said that Alison Clark at Highland Council would be involved in the future planning.

The Meeting ended at 11:31.